

**A LIFE LOST IS FOUND  
IN PROJECT 50  
By Kathleen Piché, Public Affairs Director**



Ed Givens left New York City in 1977 after losing his job. He came to California to find work and live in a warmer climate. During the 35 years that followed, Givens drifted around the Southwest, drinking, hustling and dodging the bulldog that he consistently dreamt was attacking him.

It wasn't until November, 2008, when Givens was approached by Project 50 outreach workers that he agreed to participate in the program and began to have hope that he could "do something better" with his life.

Because he had an I.D., it only took Project 50 workers a week and a half to find Givens housing. Then, it was onto rehab in Long Beach where Givens spent two weeks. He relapsed after, but was determined to be sober and took advantage of what Project 50 was offering, which included supportive permanent housing, assistance with benefits, and medical, mental health and substance abuse treatment.

Givens now lives in the Charles Cobb apartment building on Skid Row where everything he needs is close by, including his Project 50 team. He's worked with

Dr. Wendy Roberts, a Project 50 psychiatrist, on the major adjustment of not “sleeping with one eye open,” to be able to sleep through the night. Givens would wake up abruptly through the night, chased by his bulldog, then see walls and a ceiling around him instead of the night sky. It took a moment for him to relax and realize that he was safe. Givens suffered from racing thoughts and paranoia. It’s taken a lot of experimentation with medications to help him sleep normally, but the bulldog has not been at his door for two years. “I chased the bulldog away,” he said.

Dr. Roberts acknowledged the teamwork of all Project 50 staff and Given’s dedication to wellness. “It’s been very gratifying working with Ed. He’s a real team player,” Dr. Roberts said.

Givens has also gotten treatment for high blood pressure, which is now normal enough that he does not have to take medication. According to Project 50 Clinical Supervisor Ahn Tran, Givens attends all of the groups the program provides, including yoga and walking. “He is a model client,” Tran said.

On June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012, Givens met with the sister he hadn’t seen since he left New York 35 years earlier. His sister, Wanda, was only 16 years old then. When Wanda walked into the Charles Cobb apartment building on Skid Row, Givens did not recognize her. They both started crying and “couldn’t get enough hugging.”

“I never thought I’d see my family again,” he said. “It was like God lay a hand on us. When I saw Wanda, everything Project 50 did made sense.”

With the help of Project 50 staff and an organization called Birth Searcher (which has helped members of the Village in Long Beach locate family members), Givens began telephone contact with Wanda two years ago. She decided to make the trip out in June. Givens now wants to see his family as much as possible and is talking about visiting his other sisters who live in New York and Virginia.

Looking back, Givens says of that cold November night he was approached in 2008, “It must have been God doing this for me. If I weren’t in that exact spot in front of the Salvation Army, I never would have gotten into the program. I was not usually in that spot.”

Needless to say, Givens recommends Project 50. “The program is here if you want it,” he said.



Ed Givens when Project 50 Outreach workers originally contacted him.